



Statement by AOSIS at the ECOSOC Integration Segment:

“Leaving no one behind in the context of COVID-19 and the decade of action and delivery”

July 6, 2020 (10:40 – 11:50)

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges and vulnerabilities of SIDS and resulted in a new array of challenges which inhibits the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SAMOA Pathway. This year’s HLPF session provides an opportunity to assess these challenges and identify immediate and long-term actions required to address them through international support, partnerships and new pathways to maintain progress across both development agendas while addressing the impacts of COVID-19.
2. What started as a health crisis has now developed into a socio-economic crisis. Left unchecked, it can very well become a humanitarian crisis. SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs have had very specific preexisting challenges long before this crisis. These have further deepened in our countries by the current crisis. It has also resulted in the limited pool of development finance currently at our disposal being repurposed or diverted to respond to the immediate needs arising from the crisis.
3. Therefore, it is clear that this crisis has not in any way levelled the field for all developing countries. While all countries are suffering from the repercussions, the countries in special situations, who were in a more disadvantaged position to begin with, are now the furthest behind.
4. The need for this type of targeted and accessible financing is more critical now than ever. Our economies are rapidly deteriorating, debt burdens are increasing, and to make matters worse, we are also at the forefront of the impacts of climate change.

5. COVID 19 and climate are not the same but COVID-19 reveals a lot about the type of crises we will see more often with climate if we do not act and it also gives us an opportunity to tailor our response before it is too late.
 - i. Planetary health and human health are conjoined. There is no way around it. If all the earth systems were to collapse from the weight of our misuse and unabated climate change, we will not survive.
 - ii. We are all collectively vulnerable. Our world is so heavily interdependent that a disease that started in a fish market could proliferate not in months but in weeks – transforming rapidly from a health to an economic to a humanitarian crisis.
 - iii. Global economic and financial systems are not ready to deal with massive shocks of the scale not unlike COVID-19 that are projected to be triggered if we exceed the threshold of 1.5C. We have already hit 1.5C and the cascade of horrific disasters already give us serious cause for concern.
 - iv. The cost of inaction will continue to increase exponentially and the most vulnerable will be asked to pay the ultimate price. Almost all small island developing states are on the verge of economic collapse with all economic drivers drawn to a halt.
 - v. We cannot act alone or in silos. Cooperative action is essential.
6. The good news is that we already have agreed frameworks to tailor the response. We have the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to drive a coordinated holistic integrated and people centered response for sustainable development. And as important, we have the many development frameworks including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, and the Paris Agreement. As SIDS, we also have the SAMOA Pathway. We are not at a loss for solutions.
7. The window of opportunity to make measurable and good progress in achieving the SDGs and the Paris goals is rapidly closing.

8. But, let me be clear here. We do not have a decade to do this! With countries set to bring forward new or updated climate plans this year, we really have only have a couple months to get this right. Moreover, given that countries are set to invest unprecedented levels of national budgets and global finance to revive flailing economies in rich and poor countries in more or less the same timeframe, whether we recover better will be defined in the here and now.

9. We must all rally behind the calls made in the Secretary General’s Policy Brief on the socio-economic impact Covid-19 and his six climate related principles for recovering better. In order to ensure that the most vulnerable among us do not lose decades of development, more targeted action will be required by the UN system.
 - i. There is a need for International Financial Institutions, development partners and even the private sector to **acknowledge** the special circumstances afforded to our countries not only by the UN system, but various legal instruments and development frameworks.

 - ii. Further than the acknowledgment, there needs to be **concrete actions** taken by these stakeholders to bring about the necessary systemic changes to address the particular challenges that we face in development finance. Piecemeal, incremental approaches based on criteria that do not reflect the reality of our situations simply do not work.

 - iii. **Support** more coordinative efforts with the regional commissions and sub-regional organizations, who are the frontline of the system, and who are acutely aware of the challenges on the ground.

Despite the devastation caused by the COVID-19 crisis, there is a “spring of hope”. The crisis has opened up the doorway for a new frontier of multilateralism and international cooperation. Over the last 75 years, we have overcome every global challenge we have faced with a spirit of unity, solidarity and goodwill. The challenge before us is no different. As the statement issued by the

G-77 noted, “this is a time for the international community, developed and developing countries alike, to demonstrate our capability to work together in solidarity”. We need this spirit to enable us to emerge from this crisis unimpaired. The lessons that we have learnt from this should pave the path to a more resilient future.

Thank you.